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## How to add a personal touch

Board members have the opportunity to add a personal touch to fundraising efforts. As unpaid champions of the nonprofit, they set a powerful example to other donors.

Here are some ideas to make the most of that personal touch:

- Use sticky notes. Give each board member a sticky pad. (They can even have their own color.) Ask them to write a short message for your next direct-mail campaign, thanking the prospect for considering making a gift.

- Stay in touch with donors. Ask board members to send a birthday or holiday card to donors, thanking them for supporting the organization.

- When possible, have board members give site visits to donors or potential donors. Or they can introduce donors to clients who are willing to tell their stories.

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## PUBLIC VALUE PARTNERSHIPS

# The Three Rs at work in Montana

Public Value Partnership grants between Montana nonprofit arts organizations and the Montana Arts Council champion the fact that the arts are of benefit to all the citizens of Montana and are worthy of state and federal investment.

Public Value Partnerships utilize three tools we call “The Three Rs” to expand the public value of the work being done by Montana’s non-profit arts organizations:

- Building relationships;
- Creating greater relevance and meaning; and
- Establishing return on investment.

MAC believes that using “The Three Rs” strengthens participation, understanding and support from audiences, donors and funders. We’d like to share some of the best examples of these stories with you from 2012:

### Building Relationships

**MCT, Inc., Missoula:** Last fiscal year, the single most effective way we built and strengthened relationships with our patrons and friends was to create fun/unique/intimate opportunities to have interactive conversations that increased knowledge and/or deepened engagement.

Examples:

**Increasing knowledge:** At our fifth (and final) VIP donor party of the season (in May, 2012), we announced the new season (with a dramatic balloon drop!) before it was released to the general public. Receiving this knowledge in advance generated a lot of excited conversations amongst the guests, and many renewed their VIP status (\$1,000 per couple) at that time, way in advance of the new season.

**Deepening engagement no. 1:** We threw a party for our volunteers. In the past, we recruited volunteers by seating people in the auditorium and having them passively listen as staff from various departments talked from the stage about their volunteer needs. We decided we could do better by holding a fun, social event in our lobby.

The party took place in early September (2011). We provided food and drink, and MCT employees in departments that work with volunteers mingled with current and potential volunteers. The evening included fun awards (gift baskets) in various categories (e.g., “teen volunteer of the year”) for volunteers who had worked with us during the previous season.

People really enjoyed the opportunity to socialize and connect, and volunteering for MCT gained a new cachet as a way to deepen relationships and make new friends.

#### Deepening engagement

**no. 2:** We wanted to re-engage with donors and friends who were very connected to MCT in the past, but whom we had not heard from recently. Executive Director Michael McGill organized a series of intimate luncheons/building tours that enabled him to talk to people individually and in small groups.

This project is ongoing, and the results have been terrific. People are flattered by the individual attention and re-energized by the opportunity to have substantial conversations with MCT’s executive director.

**What we learned:** We learned that people are looking for friends, community and meaningful ways to get involved. We learned that giving people the opportunity to interact with our staff in social settings leads to people becoming more engaged with MCT, which in turn, generates new partnerships, more donations, and a larger group of more dedicated volunteers.



**Creating Relevance:** Narrator Neal Conan is on stage in front of an image from the Hubble Telescope during Ensemble Galilei’s performance of “A Universe of Dreams” at the Alberta Bair Theater.

### Creating Relevance

**Alberta Bair Theater, Billings:** The theater’s project, Celtic Fusion: Music for the Heart, Mind, and Soul, was a two-concert

series presented by ABT as part of its 2011-2012 season. It was instrumental in creating a greater connection with our audiences.

The project brought to the ABT stage internationally acclaimed Celtic musicians renowned for open-

ing up new territory for Irish and Scottish music, while advocating traditional and original Celtic folk music. Musicians played a variety of ancient and modern instruments, including the Celtic harp, Scottish small pipes, gamba, fiddle, recorders, whistles and percussion.

The series appealed to music audiences throughout the region by offering riveting early and modern Celtic compositions and innovative multi-media techniques that further enhanced the concert experience. Performers were Ensemble Galilei: A Universe of Dreams, narrated by Neal Conan, Jan. 21, 2012, and Solas, March 9, 2012.



**Building Relationships:** An exterior shot of the MCT Center for the Performing Arts during the VIP donor holiday party.



**Return on Investment:** The Festival Amadeus Orchestra performs a free outdoor concert in Whitefish.

Project activities included community and education outreach for both concerts. For example, the matinee by Ensemble Galilei for middle school students featured poetry and music inspired by pictures from the Hubble Space Telescope. Additional outreach included a seminar by Dr. Mark Eliason, astronomy faculty member at Montana State University Billings, on the birth, life and death of stars on Jan. 21 in the conference room at the MSU Billings downtown campus.

Prior to Solas’s public performance, the group presented a school matinee for fourth graders in Billings Public Schools that traced the history of Irish music in America with emphasis on the strong Irish culture that still exists in Butte. In addition, Dr. William Mouat, ABT education director, held a seminar for educators titled “Journey of the Irish Immigrant.” Sixteen educators participated with 13 of them receiving OPI credits.

### Return on Investment

**Glacier Symphony and Chorale, Kalispell:** The strongest economic development example we have is the creation of Montana’s only weeklong classical music festival in late July in Whitefish, called Festival Amadeus. The budget for this festival is in the range of \$80,000 (part of our \$680,000 overall budget). We are hearing more and more about both domestic and international travelers who are planning future trips and visits to northwest Montana around the Festival Amadeus schedule.

We specifically partner with local businesses, particularly Whitefish Mountain Resort (WMR) to attract visitors to fill their hotel and condo rentals. WMR has an initiative to build their summer business, and Festival Amadeus is helping them accomplish that objective. We also have a partner program with local restaurants to drive concert-related business to them.

Our musicians’ budget for Festival Amadeus is approximately \$30,000; roughly two-thirds goes to local or Montana-based musicians and one-third to guest artists.

We estimate our audience for Festival Amadeus to be comprised of about 1,200 unique concert attendees and have calculated that about 15% of those are from out of the area. This is 180 “tourists” or approximately 60 families.

Studies show that families visiting the Flathead Valley as tourists spend as much as \$300 per day on accommodations, meals, gifts and recreation. Therefore the range of

economic impact from tourists attending Festival Amadeus (assuming a three-day stay) is \$54,000 and with an impact multiplier of two times (conservative). This adds up to over \$100,000 of economic impact from Festival Amadeus alone from out-of-area visitors.

## Two sides of the charitable deductions debate

Although the recent “Fiscal Cliff” legislation retained the charitable deduction, the January 2013 issue of GuideStar shared two sides of the debate:

“Don’t Push Charities Over the Fiscal Cliff,” reprinted from the *Independent Sector*, Dec. 11, 2012, featured this letter:

Dear Mr. President and Members of Congress:

We, the undersigned, write to express our concern that ongoing discussions in Washington to avoid the so-called “fiscal cliff” may ultimately produce policies that disproportionately impact our most vulnerable communities. We lead nonprofit organizations whose tens of millions of employees and volunteers are working to improve lives in every community across America ...

And the *Nonprofit Quarterly* published this editorial, titled: “In Defense of Taxes

– Even If They Might Cut into Charitable Giving”:

“In recent weeks, nonprofit organizations mobilized against the threat that Congress would limit tax deductions for charitable gifts. Because charitable deductions provide an incentive for giving, many nonprofit leaders fear that scaling them back will make it harder to raise money. Following the ‘fiscal cliff’ negotiations, the charitable deduction remains more or less intact—at least for now.

“As we consider the broader implications of tax reform and government spending and gear up for legislative fights to come, I am concerned that many of my nonprofit colleagues are overreacting or – even worse – responding to the wrong threat ...”

For more on the debate, go to [www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org).